

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02275 142346Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7240

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 2275

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FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY, US

SUBJECT: LEBANON

REF: STATE 088187

1. WITH SHIHABI STILL UNAVAILABLE, IIMET WITH DAOUDI TODAY TO DISCUSS GENERAL QUESTIONS OF ISRAELI RESPONSE TO SYRIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS. AT END OF SCHEDULED HALF HOUR SESSION DAOUDI SAID THAT WHILE HE UNDERSTOOD OUR POINTS AND THAT I WAS NOT DELIVERING A SPECIFIC MESSAGE FOR THE PRESIDENT, HE WANTED ME TO RETURN LATER IN AFTERNOON TO AGREE ON PRECISE WORDING WHICH WOULD BEST SERVE OUR PURPOSE.

2. WHEN I MET WITH HIM AGAIN AT 1700L, I FOUND DAOUDI QAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED BY RISK THAT ASAD MIGHT INTERPRET OUR CONVEYING OUR VIEWS ON LIKELY ISRAELI REACTION

AS MEANING USG WAS SUPPORTING THE ISRAELI THREAT. HE REMINDED ME THAT ASAD COULD, IF HE FELT HE WERE BEING THREATENED, REACT HIGHLY NEGATIVELY. IN THIS CASE SUCH REACTION WOULD CERTAINLY SERVE NEITHER SYRIAN NOR AMERICAN INTERESTS. I AGREED COMPLETELY AND SAID I WAS NOT NEARLY AS UNHAPPY ABOUT THE JUNK I WAS READING DAILY IN SYRIA'S PRESS ABOUT US ME POLICY AS I WAS AT POSSIBILITY LEADERS LIKE ASAD MIGHT MISINTERPRET OUR POLICY. WE ACCORDINGLY

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WORKED OUT A PARAGRAPH FOR DAOUDI TO APPEND TO HIS REPORT

OF OUR CONVERSATION. IT OBSERVED THAT BECAUSE OF MY CONCERN OUR MESSAGE MIGHT APPEAR AS IF THE USG WERE PARTICIPATING IN AN ISRAELI THREAT, WHICH WAS DEFINITELY NOT THE CASE, I HAD HESITATED TO COMMUNICATE THE MESSAGE ITSELF. BUT I HAD CONCLUDED SUCH WOULD BE A DANGEROUS DISSERVICE TO THE SYRIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP AND THE FRANKNESS WHICH HAD CHARACTERIZED OUR EXCHANGES WITH THE SYRIANS OVER THIS CRITICAL ISSUE.

3. I ENSURED DAOUDI DREW CAREFUL DISTINCTION BETWEEN POINTS IN REFTEL PARA 3 AND "PERSONAL OBSERVATION" OF PARA 4. DAOUDI COMMENTED THAT I WAS POSSIBLY READING TOO MUCH INTO ASAD'S RESPONSE ON THE SECURITY FORCES ISSUE BUT HE WOULD BRING MY COMMENT TO THE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION. SAID OBVIOUSLY I WOULD BE HAPPY TO LEARN THAT I HAD BEEN OFF BASE BUT THOUGHT MY INTERPRETATION IMPLICITE IN THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS AS DAOUDI HAD CONVEYED THEM LAST SATURDAY.

4. DAOUDI PROMISED THAT ASAD WOULD HAVE REPORT TONIGHT. BY THE TIME OF OUR SECOND CONVERSATION, RABIN'S APRIL 14 STATEMENT HAD JUST BEEN BROADCAST BY THE BBC TO THE EFFECT THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT TOLERATE SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON BEYOND A CERTAIN POINT. THIS HAD EFFECT OF MAKING DAOUDI FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE ABOUT HIS DRAWING CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN US AND ISRAELI POSITIONS.

5. COMMENT:

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY DEALINGS WITH DAOUDI, I FELT HE WAS GENUINELY EXERTING HIMSELF TO ENSURE THE BEST POSSIBLE RECEPTION OF OUR VIEWS BY ASAD. THE APPENDED COMMENT DESCRIBED PARA 2 ABOVE IN NO WAY DETRACTED FROM THE THRUST OF YOUR MESSAGE. DAOUDI'S INITIAL REACTION WAS A FURTHER WARNING OF HOW SUSPICIOUSLY ASAD IS SCRUTINIZING OUR EVERY MOVE.

MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, INTERVENTION, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, C AT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC02275
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850107-2693
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760464/aaaacbyl.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 76 STATE 88187
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 JUN 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <20 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, LE, US, SY, IS, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (DAOUDI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006